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PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

by

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PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION.

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PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

I

WHY FORM AN ASSOCIATION?

“ Character is an achievement, the one practical achievement possible to us for ourselves and for our children. All real advance in family or individual or nation is along the lines of character .” *

With every child born, new hope springs up. He, or she, shall presently become a person of character. “ I want my child to be happy ” says mother ; “ I want my boy to get on ” says father ; but deep in their hearts lies the living hope that boy or girl may grow to the full stature of a human person, may achieve a stable, balanced character. All is well at first but as the years pass children show their weaknesses as well as their gifts. They go through puzzling phases, develop tricks of speech and behaviour. They seem to lose their lovable traits and become moody, or reticent or antagonistic. Thoughtful parents wonder if all is well, if their boy or girl is growing up towards their first hopes. “ I wonder what T is like at school ? ”

★ “ Parents and Children ” by C. M. Mason.

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say the parents. Teachers, too, share these anxieties. At school there may be progress in arithmetic but the same uncertain temper ; or a child may behave well yet remain untouched by any call to thought or work. "I wonder what T is like at home ?" say the teachers.

Parents and teachers both have the achievement of character at heart. It is they who must lay the foundations upon which the children will build their lives—their thoughts, words and deeds—their conduct. How important it is that home and school should understand each other, should co-operate in matters of training, intellectual interests and health. Co-operation is greatly helped by the formation of a Parents' Association. These lively groups of fathers, mothers and teachers meet regularly for talk and discussion. Occasionally a lecture is asked for, or an outing is arranged ; sometimes the meeting takes the form of a "brains trust". Always the business of the meeting is concerned with the home and school life of the children. Regular attendance at such meetings proves two things : (a) That a wealth of wisdom and experience lies ready for sharing among the

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parents present. So many perplexities and problems brought up for discussion prove to be common to many homes and the solution is often given by a parent who has overcome a similar difficulty. Apart from the opportunities provided by the meetings, this experience might never become available to another member, sorely in need of it. (b) That those who teach can bring to the discussions a different range of experience, a knowledge of educational principles and of school practices which all throw clear light in obscure places. These two factors make Association meetings lively occasions full of exchange of thought and experience, all present taking an active part in the proceedings.

The children's welfare and their upbringing is the first intention behind the formation of a Parents' Association. There is, however, another aspect to consider. The school is not merely a place where children are taught ; it is a centre of education, upholding and preserving the things of the spirit, supplying the needs of the mind. These things are easily lost in the business of daily living. Mother "has given up

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her music"; father "has no time to read history now". A few of the meetings are happily devoted to enjoying the term's pictures, or to listening to a programme of music illustrating the work of the term's composer. One Parents' Association has a weekly Country Dance evening, another goes with the school-outing to Stratford-on-Avon to hear the Shakespeare play for the term. This sharing by parents in the intellectual life of the school makes that life more real to their children, to themselves and to the staff of the school. It is another much needed form of co-operation.

Parents whose children attend a P.N.E.U. School become familiar, through Parents' Association meetings, with the educational principles and writings of Charlotte Mason, the founder of the Union. An understanding of these principles forms the soundest basis for co-operation between home and school.

The work of every Parents' Association is to promote a clearer understanding and a more effective practice of all that goes to the building of character, at home and at school. Details of plans and arrangements come up for consideration at meetings but these should always

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take second place. Time must always be found for matters of true educational value, of these above all:—

Authority, discipline, knowledge and worship, for without these there is no stability of character.

PARENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

II

HOW TO FORM AN ASSOCIATION

Preparation for first meeting:

Ask an interested parent to be Secretary pro tem, and to:—

Find a suitable speaker for the preliminary meeting.

Choose a suitable room, either in school or in the home of an interested parent. Select a chairman to hold office for the first meeting only, preferably not the head or a member of the staff.

Send out invitations to parents, teachers and to others who may be interested (old pupils, parents, and parents of prospective pupils), using some such form as the following:—

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" You are invited to attend a meeting to
be held on.....at
.....o'clock, by kind permission of
.....to consider forming a
Parents' Association in connection with
..... School, when
..... will
speak on the subject of.....
.....

R.S.V.P. to.....

If possible, choose a time which is suitable
for fathers as well as mothers.

First Meeting:—

- (a) When the proposal for a Parents' Association has been put to the meeting, names of those interested should be taken after allowing time for some informal discussion.
- (b) The Chairman should then ask for nominations for a small Committee to include Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Nominations should be

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seconded and put to the vote.

- (c) The Chairman should ask for suggestions for future meetings, how often to hold them and on what subjects parents would like to have discussions, etc. The place, date and time of the next meeting should be fixed.
- (d) Address and votes of thanks.

N.B. The Committee should meet as soon as possible to plan the next meeting and draft a simple Constitution for the Association.

Second Meeting:—

- (a) The Secretary should report on the Committee's preliminary meeting and read the draft of the Constitution. Discussion should follow and the Constitution be re-read and put to the meeting.
- (b) The Treasurer should announce details of the annual subscription and ask for immediate payment if possible.
- (c) Any other business.
- (d) Address, if any, followed by discussion and votes of thanks.

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Further Meetings:—

A Programme should be drawn up at least a term ahead.

Variety in the form of the meetings is essential. These could occasionally be connected with exhibitions of the work of the School and with school entertainments.

P.N.E.U. Parents' Associations

In these a definite study of Charlotte Mason's educational thought should form an important part of every programme. This has been successfully achieved.

- (i) by talks and discussions.
- (ii) by readings from chapters of the books of C. M. Mason, followed by narration and discussion.
- (iii) by reading articles which appear from time to time in the "Parents' Review."

P.N.E.U. membership forms and literature should be available at each meeting of the Association.